

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 and 5-19 are pending in the present application with Claims 8 and 15 having been amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Fujimoto in view of Yoshida et al.; Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Fujimoto in view of Yoshida et al. in view of Reese et al.; and Claims 1-3, 5-7 and 10-19 were allowed.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter.

Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Fujimoto in view of Yoshida et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 8 has been amended to recite that the cleaning unit of a lower one of the image forming units adjacent to each other and the developing unit of an upper one of the image forming units adjacent to each other are arranged at positions partly overlapping with each other in a vertical direction such that the cleaning unit of the lower one of the image forming units is below the developing unit of the upper one of the image forming units in a vertical direction. This is possible because the image forming units are facing an inclined transfer belt.

In a nonlimiting example, Figure 2 illustrates that the adjacent image forming units 4M and 4C are arranged in such a manner that a cleaning device 9M in the image forming unit 4M vertically overlaps with a developing device 10C in the image forming unit 4C (see page 11, lines 5-13) such that the cleaning unit 9M of the lower one of the image forming units is below the developing unit 10C of the upper one of the image forming units in the

vertical direction. Therefore, it is possible to shorten the lateral length in comparison with an apparatus in which a transfer belt is horizontally disposed (see page 11, lines 13-15).

The outstanding Office Action relies on Yoshida et al. as teaching a cleaning unit partially overlapping an adjacent developing unit. However, as shown in Figure 1, the cleaning device 6Y is above the adjacent developing device 4M. This would still be the situation if the apparatus was slanted as the claimed invention. That is, tilting Figure 1 of Yoshida et al. to be in an inclined direction, still results in the cleaning device 6Y being above the developing device 4M. On the contrary, the cleaning device of the present invention is below an adjacent developing unit as shown in Figure 2, for example.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted independent Claim 8 and each of the claims depending therefrom are also allowable.

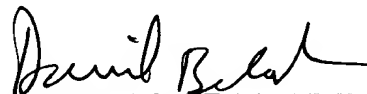
Further, it is respectfully submitted the rejection of Claim 9 noted in the outstanding Office Action has also been overcome as Claim 9 depends on Claim 8, which as discussed above is believed to be allowable, and because Reese et al. also do not teach or suggest the newly amended claim feature.

Claim 15 has also been amended to correct a minor cosmetic informality.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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